

# Applying to Graduate Programs?

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12/08/2020



I was the first in my immediate family to apply to graduate school, and the first in my extended family to aim for a PhD. I knew I wanted to study peer relations among adolescents, and that I was drawn toward quantitative methods and meta-analysis. However, I had no idea how to begin searching for a graduate program that would be the right fit. I spent hours searching the internet for programs and graduate faculty who seemed like they might be a good match, keeping in mind the program's geographical location and how difficult it would be for me to visit my family on the east coast if I were to move far away. After I narrowed down my list of programs, I reached out to prospective mentors! As scary as it seemed at the time, I realized that faculty and graduate coordinators were excited to hear from me and eager to learn more about me, too, to see if I was a good fit for the program. In the end, rather than focus on a specific type of training, I focused on match with faculty advisors. I applied to Developmental Psychology, Community Psychology, and Human Development and Family Studies programs, knowing that each would provide different training for how to approach the study of peer relations among adolescents. I am so happy that I ultimately chose to earn my PhD in HDFS. I love the interdisciplinary nature of the field, and how different theories, methods, and topics from other fields can all be studied within HDFS.

Having gone through the graduate application process ourselves, faculty in HDFS are happy to share tips and tricks for putting together impressive application materials. Most applications to graduate programs in the social sciences require the same things: A letter of purpose/personal statement, high GRE scores, letters

of recommendation, and sometimes a sample of student writing. So how do you make yourself stand out? And how do you ensure you are sharing the *right* information with the graduate admissions committee? Our number one recommendation is to do your research on the program before you apply.

- Is the department and type of training it offers are perfect match for your career goals? Tell them!
- Are there specific faculty with whom you'd like to work? Say which ones, and why!
- Do you have skills and experiences that would help you contribute to specific projects? Share this!

The graduate admissions committee wants to know that you'll thrive in the program, and these details communicate that you will.

Interested in learning more about HDFS graduate programs in HDFS? Check out our [November 2020 webinar](#).